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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman, Ranking Minority Member Committee on Government Reform Markup of the Clean Sports Act of 2005

May 26, 2005

I am very pleased that our Committee is moving ahead rapidly with this markup of the Clean Sports Act of 2005. And I am very pleased to be supporting this legislation with Chairman Davis and our Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Member, Mr. Souder and Mr. Cummings. Their leadership on this issue has been outstanding.

For me, this bill is less about sports than it is about public health. At our Committee hearing in March, we heard the testimony of seven famous baseball players. But what was most moving to me was the testimony of the parents, not the stars.

We learned about the experiences of three families — the Hootons, the Garibaldis, and the Marreros — whose lives were shattered when their sons committed suicide after using steroids. And we learned that their sons are not the only ones at risk. As many as 500,000 teenagers have experimented with steroids.

This legislation is an effort to break the cycle of steroid use that endangers our children. Aspiring young athletes need to know that steroid use in the pros leads to suspension and expulsion, not home run records and adulation.

The tough standards in this legislation will reduce the use of performance-enhancing drugs in professional sports. And in doing so, the legislation will reduce the use of these dangerous drugs by college and high-school athletes.

There is an absolute correlation between the culture of steroids in the major league clubhouse and the culture of steroids in high school gyms. If we can remove steroids from the clubhouse, we will fix the problems in school locker rooms.

I have commended Major League Baseball and other leagues for the steps they have initiated since the March hearings. But there should be minimum uniform standards that every

league must meet. And families should be able to trust that there is an independent regulatory body that will oversee league compliance.

Some have asked how what we are doing compares with the legislation considered yesterday in the Commerce Committee. The Commerce bill introduced by Rep. Stearns is good legislation. It covers a wide range of performance-enhancing drugs and it has strong penalties.

But it doesn't deal with certain important issues, like the problem of designer steroids and testing protocols. And it doesn't have the potential to reach college-level athletics. I have prepared a fact sheet on the differences between the bills, which I would like to be made part of today's record.

These are significant differences, but they are also ones that I believe can be reconciled. As a member of both committees, I will work hard to do exactly that.

One final issue I want to address is the speed with which we are moving this legislation. I heard concerns from at least one players' union that holding the markup today could limit its opportunity to comment on the bill and suggest changes.

We should move fast, because this is an important health issue. But today's markup is just the first step in the legislative process. As we proceed, there will be ample opportunity for consultation and input. And we will be meeting with leagues, players, health experts, and others to make sure that all voices are heard and considered.

Today's legislation will help restore integrity to the sports we love. But most important, it will send a clear and direct message to teenagers: the use of performance-enhancing drugs is no ticket to athletic success.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.